

A Guide to Connecticut Voter Registration for High School Students and New Voters

2002 Edition

Written and distributed by the
Office of the
Secretary of the State
Susan Bysiewicz





Today, registering to vote and voting are more accessible than ever. However, many people, whether they are 17 or 70, are not fully aware of voting procedures.

Produced by the Connecticut Secretary of the State's Office as part of the First Vote Connecticut program, this booklet is designed to answer most of your questions. It is just one of many materials available to inform the public about the sometimes confusing world of voting.

This booklet includes information on:

- · voter registration basics
- · the election calendar
- · absentee voting
- voting procedures
- · who is elected when
- · voting while at college

If you have any questions that are not answered here, please feel free to call your local officials, the Secretary of the State's Office, or the League of Women Voters in Connecticut. You'll find your local Town Clerk or Registrar of Voters listed in the blue pages of your phone book. The Secretary of the State's Office can be reached at (860) 509-6100 or (800) 540-3764, toll free. The League of Women Voters can be reached at (203) 288-7996.

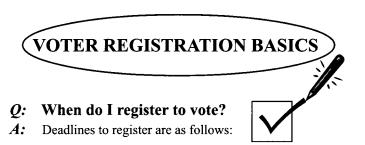
Many thanks to teachers for bringing the challenges of



citizen participation to the classroom throughout the state – and to you, the new voter, for taking advantage of this opportunity to learn about the procedures and responsibilities of voting and good citizenship.

Every vote counts, and you can make a difference.

Susan Bysiewicz



Based on today's statutory requirements, you must be registered at least 14 days before a general election. You may register up until the day before election day if you turn 18, become a U.S. citizen, or move into the town after the 14 day deadline.

If you wish to vote in a primary election, your application must be postmarked by the 5th day before a primary (OR received by your Registrar of Voters or a voter registration agency by the 5th day before a primary). You may apply in person to your Registrar of Voters or Town Clerk until 12:00 noon on the last business day before a primary.

If you live at school part of the year, you may register as a voter in that town or in your hometown.

Q: How do I register to vote?

- A: You may register IN PERSON at:
 - the office of the Registrar of Voters or Town Clerk in any city/town hall in Connecticut during normal office hours
 - special registration sessions held at other times and places
 - your home during a voter canvasses where permitted by the local Registrars of Voters.

If it would be more convenient for you, you can always choose to register BY MAIL:

Applications are available from motor vehicle offices, public libraries, military recruitment centers, and from any state office where persons apply for state assistance. Many other public and private organizations and agencies make voter registration cards available. You may also request an application from your Registrar of Voters or Town Clerk.

You will receive an application in the mail from the Department of Motor Vehicles when your driver's license is due for renewal. You can fill out the form and send it directly to your local town hall.

O: Can I register to vote before I am 18?

A: You may pre-register beginning when you are 17 years old. Once you are pre-registered, you will automatically be added to the voting list when you turn 18.

Q: What are the requirements to be able to register?

A: You must be a United States citizen, a resident of a Connecticut town, and 17 years of age. If you have been convicted of a felony and you have completed your confinement and parole, you can regain your right to vote. You must contact the registrar of voters of your town to restore your right to vote.

Q: Will I ever have to re-register?

A: The only time you must re-register is when you move to another Connecticut town. If you change your name (for example, by marriage), or your address in town, notify the Office of the Registrar of Voters in your community.

Each year the Registrar of Voters may send you a postcard or letter to ask you if your name and address are still current. <u>SEND IT BACK</u> to be certain your name will not be removed from the voter list.





Q: What are the key dates for elections in November 2002?

A: The deadline for voter registration is October 22nd (although persons who become U. S. citizens, move into town or become 18 years old after October 22nd, may register in the office of the Registrar of Voters or Town Clerk up to 12:00 noon on November 4, 2002).

Absentee ballots for the November 5, 2002 election are available beginning on October 4, 2002.

Primaries before the November election will be September 10, 2002. Your application must be postmarked or received no later than September 5, 2002. (You may apply in person to your Town Clerk and Registrar until 12:00 noon on the last business day before a primary.)

Absentee ballots for primaries are available beginning August 20, 2002.

Q: What are the key dates for elections in November 2003?

A: The deadline for voter registration is October 21, 2003 (although persons who become U.S. citizens, move into town or become 18 years old after October 21nd, may register in the office of the Registrar of Voters or Town Clerk up to 12:00 noon on November 4, 2003).

Absentee ballots for the November 3, 2003 election are available beginning October 3, 2003.

Primaries before the November election will be September 9, 2003. Your application must be postmarked or received no later than September 4, 2003. (You may apply in person to your Town Clerk and Registrar until 12:00 noon on the last business day before a primary.)

Absentee ballots for primaries are available beginning August 19, 2003.

WHO IS ELECTED WHEN?

Q: Are some elected offices voted on during evennumbered years and others during odd-numbered years?

A: Yes. In every even-numbered year, (2002, 2004, etc.) Connecticut citizens elect, to 2-year terms:

- all members of the Connecticut House and Senate
- all members of the U.S. House of Representatives

In even-numbered, non-presidential years (2002, 2006, etc.), Connecticut citizens elect, to 4-year terms:

- Statewide officers (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the State, State Treasurer, Comptroller and Attorney General)
- · Probate Judges

U. S. Senators are elected to 6-year terms in some even-numbered years (2000, 2004, 2006, etc.).

In all odd-numbered years, (2001, 2003, etc.) Connecticut citizens elect:

• city and town officers, city and town mayors, members of council, town clerk, local boards of education, and other officers depending upon municipal charters.

Q: On what day are elections held?

A: In even-numbered years all towns hold elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. In odd-numbered years, most towns hold municipal elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, but 7 towns hold elections on the first Monday in May. If needed, a party primary is held on the 56th day before the election.



Q: Do I have to choose a political party when I register to vote?

A: No, it is your choice. If you choose not to register with a party (that is, you wish to be an unaffiliated voter), simply indicate that choice in the appropriate place on the registration form. You should remember, though, that only enrolled party members are eligible to vote in primaries.

Q: Is there any benefit to joining a political party when I register to vote?

A: Declaring a party affiliation enables you to vote in that party's primary election, which is open only to party members. You may later choose to change enrollment to or from a political party.

VOTING PROCEDURES

Q: How do I actually vote?

A: Call your Registrar of Voters to find out where you should vote. Some towns have several voting locations based on street addresses. If you vote in person at your local polling place, you should look for a sample ballot listing the candidates and their party affiliations, the offices they are seeking, and any issues placed before voters. It is wise to study this sample ballot before you enter the voting booth.

Most towns in Connecticut use mechanical voting machines. When you enter the voting booth at your polling place, move the large red curtain handle to the right. Then pull down the pointer over your selection. If you change your mind, push the pointer back up and pull down another pointer. Your vote will be recorded only when you leave the pointers down and exit the booth by moving the large red curtain handle to the left. As of June 2001, optical scan voting machines were certified for use in the State of Connecticut and additional electronic voting machines may be tested in upcoming elections.

If you have any questions about the voting machines once you are inside the polling place, do not hesitate to ask the election officials for assistance.

Q: Do I need to bring identification to vote?

A: Yes. When you enter the area to vote, you must present identification (your driver's license or anything that has your name and one of the following, signature, photo, or address). If you forget your I.D., you can sign a statement which indicates that you are the person listed on the voting list.

Q: When are the polls open?

A: The polls are open from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. for primaries and elections.

Q: What are write-in laws?

A: If there is a registered write-in candidate for an office at an election, any voter may write in the name of any person they choose for the office. However, only votes for those write-in candidates who have pre-registered with the Secretary of the State's Office will be counted.

When you enter the voting booth at your polling place, lift the write-in slide for that office at the top of the machine and write in the name of the candidate of your choice.

Note: Write-in votes are not allowed in primaries.

Q: Where can I get more information on voting and candidates?

A: You can contact the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, the Registrars of Voters, political parties, civic organizations, newspapers, radio stations, television channels, and the Internet for information on candidates. You may also consider attending a candidates' forum or listening to local political speeches.



Q: Can I vote if I won't be home on Election Day?

A: Yes, any qualified registered voter may vote by absentee ballot, if unavailable to vote in person due to: absence from town during all voting hours, illness, physical disability, active U.S. military service or religious reasons.

Absentee ballots are available beginning:

- 21 days before a primary
- 31 days before a regular election

Request an application for an absentee ballot from your Town Clerk, either in person or by mail. Complete the application and return it in person or by mail to the Town Clerk.

If you return the application by mail, the absentee ballot will be sent to you by mail. You may return the completed ballot to the Town Clerk in person or by mail; your ballot must be received by 8:00 pm on election day.

If you have an unexpected illness or physical disability within six (6) days before the polls close on election day or primary day, you can still vote. Call your Town Clerk for the procedures to follow.

If you find you can vote after having voted by absentee ballot, you must go to the Town Clerk's Office before 10:00 a.m. on Election Day to request withdrawal of your absentee ballot. The Town Clerk will issue a signed statement for you to present to the moderator of your polling place so you can vote in person.

Q: What if I join the military and get sent overseas?

A: There are special rules that make it easy for members of the Armed Forces to vote. For example, you or a family member can request that your Town Clerk mail a ballot to you early, and a ballot mailed from overseas will be counted if received by Election Day.

Every unit in the Armed Forces has a Voting Officer who has a book explaining the voting requirements of each state. If you would prefer, you can use the same procedures described for absentee voters (see the previous page!).

VOTING WHILE IN COLLEGE

Q: When I'm in college out-of-town, how do I decide where to vote?

A: When you are attending college at a school outside your hometown, you may vote either in person in the town where your school is located or by absentee ballot in your previous hometown – whichever is most convenient for you. Regardless, you must be a registered voter in the town where you plan to vote. The U.S. Census Bureau considers students to be residents of their college community, so it is perfectly okay to register as a voter at school, and be added to the voting list in that town.

Connecticut registration forms are generally available on college campuses in Connecticut.

If you are attending a college outside
Connecticut, you can register to vote by using a federal voter registration card available at most campuses or through the Federal
Elections Commission. You may contact the local Registrar of Voters with questions you may have.

Q: Will I be called for jury duty if I register to vote?

A: Jury lists are selected randomly from lists provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Revenue Services, Department of Labor, and Registrars of Voters. You have just as much a chance to be selected as a juror if you drive or pay taxes as you do if you are a registered voter.

Q: If I enroll in the armed services, can I register to vote at the same time?

A: They are totally separate registrations, but many recruitment offices distribute and receive voter registration applications and forward them to the appropriate Registrars of Voters.

Q: Do I have to vote on all the offices and issues on the ballot?

A: No, you may vote for as many as you like. If you really only care about one candidate for one office on an entire ballot, you may vote for that one person if that is your choice. However, we encourage that you vote the entire ballot.

SHAPE TOMORROW: REGISTER & VOTE.

Accompanying this booklet is a <u>VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION</u>. Simply fill it out, and then sign, fold and mail it to your local Registrars of Voters at your town or city hall.

Additional copies of this application are available at the Office of the Secretary of the State, and at any town or city hall. If you have any questions, contact your local town or city hall, or the Office of the Secretary of the State at (860) 509-6100, www.sots.state.ct.us or 30 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06016.

Thank you for your interest in voting and for your participation in the government process here in Connecticut.



Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

Printing made possible by the Connecticut Citizenship Fund, Inc. through a grant from



30 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-509-6100
www.sots.state.ct.us

2002 Edition